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ABSTRACT

Past experiments in lengthening the school year have produced mixed results, with savings being realized only over a long period of time. However, increased tax pressure, school overcrowding, and the need for additional educational programs contribute pressures for change. Extended educational opportunity through better utilization of facilities in a lengthened school year can help relieve the strain on both budgets and overcrowded classrooms. Extended school year plans are grouped into staggered attendance programs, summer programs, and extended year plans. When both factors of quality and quantity are considered, an extended school year of continuous study for all pupils seems to offer the greatest promise. Staff and community involvement, support, and preparation are essential to the success of any change. (Author)

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Extended Educational Opportunities and the Extended School Year

by

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I. Focus and Background

There are many important issues facing the public schools today - some as important or perhaps more important or inter-related with utilization of facilities. I think we can agree that it is, as Ed Sullivan would say, a really big issue and offers possibilities for improved educational opportunity as well as relieving the strain on budgets.

At the outset I would like to emphasize extended educational opportunity through better utilization of facilities. To me there is a world of difference between just ordinary use of buildings and better use. It implies a difference in program - not more of the same.

I know full well that it is trite to say that we are living in a changing world and that school systems must adapt to change. Goethe once wrote, "Life belongs to the living and he who lives must be prepared for changes." He was a good prophet for every one in school administration today must be prepared for change or he will soon be obsolete.

As an illustration of the changes in school rules, I would like to share with you a few suggestions made to pupils by State Superintendent of Common Schools, W.W. Stetson in 1895.

> Stand and sit erect.
> Move promptly and quietly.
> Speak distinctly and gently.
> Study more than textbooks.
> Master what you study.
> Be courteous and thoughtful.
> Be diligent and trustworthy.
> Make the most of the best in you.

These might be called the Frank Merriwell type of rules but I suspect some of these sentiments make you long for the good old days.

Actually, as we compare both our elementary and secondary schools with those of a generation ago we find that little has changed in programs and scheduling and the biggest difference is in facilities.

Some very interesting things have been happening in recent times. The curriculum is being revised, professional competency is being upgraded, innovations are being tried and more functional design is evident in school facilities. Now the extended school year is being seriously studied, that embraces not only utilization but all aspects of the entire program.

If there is not to be a breakdown in our educational systems we will be wise to take a close look at how it is working. We must ask questions and seek solutions. Some of the questions might include: Is the four-year high school as now organized logical? Are there different and better ways to use school facilities? Can we do more for the gifted and the disadvantaged? Can we do more to meet the vocational needs of our youth and our industries? The answers are not clear, except that some changes are necessary. We need to collectively take a hard look to see if we can do better, to search for ways to broaden educational opportunity and make school facilities fit the pupils rather than pupils fitting into the schools.

Two recent statements point to what was labelled in the New York Times as "More Education for the Dollar." One by President Nixon inferred that education must mend its old ways before it can get new money. The other, a recent report by the Carnegie Commission demanded that the elementary and secondary schools be held accountable for putting an end to the debilitating process of passing on generation after generation of poorly educated

graduates.

This is a new age, one of unrest, criticism of the establishment, relevance and reform, but in all this confusion there are some plusses. As Malcolm P. Stamper, Vice president of Boeing Co. recently wrote, "If you look at the output of the educational system - the new opera, the artificial kidney, the walk on the moon, the 747-then you are inevitably drawn to the conclusion that however deficient it might be, it is still the best in the world." Our aim should be to make the best full and complete use of facilities entrusted to our care. This may seem obvious but it is not that simple. There is a distinct feeling abroad that school plants are too expensive and are not being used to capacity.

The length of the school day and number of days in a school year have been determined substantially by tradition. The pattern of life for most people has changed greatly from the time when the standard school year was adopted. In the early days of our history when it was necessary for children to work on the farms in the planting and harvesting seasons, the demands of agriculture-not concern for education-dictated the school calendar. Schools were first conducted in the winter months when other activities were at a lull and boys could be spared. Men teachers were replaced by women teachers in the spring term.

While this type of school scheduling was going on in the rural areas many of the cities, on the other hand, conducted schools year round. This seems rather startling today but about 1850 Buffalo operated schools throughout the year; Baltimore and Cincinnati had school for eleven months; New York had 49 weeks and Chicago 48 weeks. These extended school years generally had four 12

week terms with a vacation at Christmas and a few weeks in the summer. As time went on the school year became more uniform as urban districts reduced the number of weeks and rural schools lengthened the year. By 1915, the nine month year became quite standard. It has been said that if we wait long enough education will come full circle. Perhaps that is what we are about to see.

It may be pertinent to note that the 180 day (175 in Maine) school year is below average when compared with the school year in other countries. Many countries have a school year even longer than the 200 to 210 day calendar proposed by advocates of an extended school year. China has the longest year with 252 for elementary pupils and 240 for secondary. Austria, Czecholslovakia and Denmark follow in order. The USSR has 228 to 234 for both elementary and secondary. Japan has 210 days and only two countries, Ecuador with 170 and Italy with 154, are below the United States. At this time the average length of the school year in 51 countries is 210 days. I might add that the Soviet schools operate six days per week which may explain how the schedule is achieved. It is claimed that pupils attend these schools with no ill effects on health or learning.

The traditional five-hour day, five days a week, 36 weeks per year has been accepted for some years now in Maine as sufficient over a twelve-year period to prepare our young people for college or work, while at the same time allowing several months of free summer time for work or play. The inadequacy of this schedule to provide vocational training is very evident. The longer school day required for vocational classes in order to meet Federal regulations actually operated as a deterrent and reduced enrollment,

as those students felt they were being oppressed and treated differently.

The idea of making better use of facilities by operating year round as a way to economize on construction and at the same time improve the quality of education is one of the "hottest issues" today. For a long time there has been mounting concern about the uneconomical use of school buildings and the long vacation for teachers. Buildings stand idle in plain view for approximately three months and teachers in many cases are seen working at summer jobs. With the spotlight glaring on increased school expenditures there is a real need to reexamine the way schools are being used. The traditional length of the school year is out-moded. There is no good and compelling reason why public schools should not be open and used by pupils and citizens twelve months each year from early morning to late evening. There is no more reason why schools should be shut down for long periods than hotels, airports, or hospitals. Shortages of building space and the need for more flexible curricula offerings demonstrate that the use of school plants must be extended.

Design of buildings should take as a first consideration their widest and most extensive use. They should be constructed to house a program which will meet the needs of the students. Some school systems in recent years have been offering some remedial programs and other work during the summer months. This practice, however, is not widespread or effective enough to constitute a break-through. Buildings should also be used for community purposes such as adult education. The 104th Legislature authorized the use of school buildings for political meetings. Political use may

be good, for citizens are voicing their concerns. The only way they can react so far is in budget cuts and they are speaking with a loud voice in some places.

It is true that the full twelve-month year, or variations of an extended school year, has been tried and rejected by many school systems. Some which started with great promise and enthusiasm have been abandoned. The earliest began in Bluffton, Indiana and was discontinued in 1915. In 1912, Newark, New Jersey initiated a continuous four-quarter plan which is the forerunner of the New York Quadrimester Plan. This was discontinued in 1930 because of the costs involved. Nashville, Tennessee began a four-quarter plan in 1922 which lasted for ten years. In 1925, thirteen cities were experimenting with the four-quarter plan and all had abandoned it by 1932. In 1946, Rochester, Minnesota and Glencoe, Illinois began an extended contract for teachers plan. Both are still in existence. Teachers have eleven-month contracts; spending the summers teaching, working in recreation programs, workshops, and travel. Every fourth summer a teacher may have time off with full pay. Similar programs are in operation in six or seven other cities. Fort Lauderdale, Florida has operated on a trimester plan since 1963. It has a 210 day year with a "July Program" for students and a two-week orientation for teachers in August. Thus school facilities are used year round.

From 1964 to 1967 Florida State University Laboratory School used a 225 day trimester plan. After the trial they reported that this form of the extended school year does not produce enough improvement in achievement to justify the expense and effort.

Between 1964 and 1967, a modified quadrimester plan was tried in the Cato-Meridian School in New York. A 200 day school year was combined with a longer school day to meet the equivalent of a 220 day school year. Resistence was encountered by parents, teachers and students. It was reported that "the academic gains were not large enough to support the thesis that lengthening the elementary school day improves achievement."

Atlanta, Georgia, and Fulton County in that state began a modified four quarter plan in September 1968. The purpose of the change from the traditional year was not economy but to improve what was called "continuous and relevant educational opportunities." Its major thrust was a complete revision of the secondary school curriculum. In Atlanta the year is divided into four equal quarters. The first year all students attended the first three quarters. The fourth quarter is optional and students who attend may choose which two of the next three quarters to attend. Students may accelerate by attending all four quarters. In a question and answer dialogue, the question was posed, "Does the quarter system cost more?" and the answer was "Yes, four of anything costs more than three." In the Fulton County system the four quarter plan replaced the traditional nine months school, the Carnegie unit, the concept of a totally sequential curriculum and the concept of scheduling pupils once a year into a master plan. The purpose is not to save money, to make better use of school plants, to relieve overcrowded conditions, or to accelerate students through high school. These, however, can be by-products.

Reasons for the failure of the early extended year programs which began in the period following World War II seem to be:

1. The major concern was economy and the programs did not achieve

the savings expected. The opposite proved to be true in most cases.

2. Lack of public understanding and acceptance.
3. Lack of support from the education profession.

These illustrations are sufficient to indicate that despite some failures, interest is on the rise. Some of the early mistakes, motivated by economic reasons rather then quality education, can be avoided.

II. Pressures for Change

Three common factors or pressures have been evident in most efforts to extend the school year:

1. The pressure of numbers as evidenced by teacher shortage and overcrowded classrooms.
2. The pressure of taxes - the need for more new facilities is being questioned and better use of present quarters is being subjected to scrutiny.
3. The pressure of program - the explosion of knowledge and expanding body of material to be studied has made it difficult to succeed in the standard school year.

These pressures surfaced last year in Maine when the Joint Committee on Education of the 104th Legislature became concerned with increasing state construction aid and attempted to rewrite the law. After much work and consideration by a committee aide and after drafting several proposals a very short amendment was proposed and enacted which has tightened the conditions for state support by requiring:

> the State Board of Education have evidence of the need for capital outlay before approval of state aid is granted. Evidence of need

> shall include obsolescence or inadequacy of present buildings, enrollment projections financial ability of the unit, utilization projections and educational purpose.

While it was quite obvious that local units were not building beyond their needs, the amendment places an added responsibility on the State Board to screen each item carefully. In other action, the Maine Legislature turned down an act to increase the number of days of pupil attendance from 175 to 180 but passed a Joint Order directing the Maine Educational Council to study the desirability of extending legal requirements to possibly include a 210 day school year and report its recommendations and implementing legislation to the next session of the Legislature.

In view of these pressures, it is time to reevaluate, reappraise, and time to question whether part-time use of facilities is sufficient and whether learning should take place only from September to June. This is a topic of concern and study by several state departments of education and some action is taking place. Colorado, for example, has hosted a national seminar on the Extended School Year designed to provide practical suggestions and ideas on how to make school year changes to enhance educational programs. This is not an isolated approach, for another program on the year-round school is to be held in Pittsburgh. These seminars cut across many lines,-scheduling, staff utilization, continuous progress, in-service education, school organization, plant requirements and, of course, citizen support. What is being attempted is to find practical information on how to develop a new way of life for education of the future.

III. Three Types of Plans

I would like to comment briefly on a few of the plans which have been proposed.

Many of the plans have similar aspects such as:

1. Provision for enriched learning opportunities.
2. Better use of pupil time in the summer months.
3. Acceleration.
4. Saving of money by reducing the number of pupils required to repeat grades.
5. Fuller utilization of school plants.
6. Saving in construction money by not building new facilities.
7. Meeting temporary building shortages.
8. Providing full employment for teachers.
9. Increasing the annual income of teachers.
10. Alleviating the teacher shortage.

These plans roughly fall into three principle categories (a) Staggered Attendance, (b) Summer Programs, and (c) Extended Year Plans. Some of these have some intriguing labels such as Trimesters, Quadrimesters, Split-trimesters, Sliding Quarters and Multiple Trails. I will not have time to go into the detail and merit of each but will endeavor to cover the three categories mentioned above.

A. Staggered Attendance

The plan divides the school year into a certain number of terms with enrollment divided in the same fashion. It is characteristic for one group to be on vacation during each term. A number of plans have been proposed but few actually tested. The best known of these plans is the rotating four-

quarter wherein each pupil attends for three quarters and vacations during the fourth. It does not lengthen the school year for any one student but does keep school in operation year round. Then there is the Five Term Plan which is similar except five terms are involved. The Twelve-Four Plan proposed by Montgomery County, Maryland divides the student body into four groups with school in operation for twelve weeks and then a four-week vacation. Under this plan, 75% of the students are in attendance at any one time.

Another variation is the Sliding Four-Quarter Plan which divides the school into four groups with one-fourth beginning each quarter and attending for four quarters and then vacationing for one quarter.

Then there is the Pupil Rotation Plan which has an eleven month school year with all vacations in July. The enrollment is divided into four groups with each group attending for six consecutive quarters and then vacationing for two quarters. This allows a six-month vacation every other year at different times of year.

The real question is how feasible staggered attendance plans are. The Florida Educational Research and Development Council in 1966 concluded:

> No plan of staggering the school term where part of the pupils are on vacation all the time and part in school will save money. Such plans are likely to lower the quality of education. Plans of this type also incur strenuous parental opposition and involve school authorities in serious administrative difficulties. Wherever such plans have been tried they have been abandoned.

A Delaware study found no real evidence of clear-cut educational advantage. There is no opportunity for enrichment or acceleration. On the positive side, it was claimed that it eased overcrowding and can be a means of reducing pupil-

teacher ratio provided the faculty is not reduced.

The literature reveals conflicting testimony on the economics of such plans. Some studies show that the plan actually increased operating costs and can be more costly than the traditional year even including new construction.

The Florida Council reported:

> The only feasible all-year plan yet developed for reducing school costs involve all pupils attending school for an extended year and the acceleration of pupils in order to reduce enrollment.

B. Summer Programs

Summer programs, like the staggered attendance, utilize buildings year round. The objective, however, it different. It is directed toward improving the educational programs by offering expanded opportunities for remedical work, enrichment and acceleration. Attendance generally is voluntary. There are three distinct types:

1. An extension of the regular school year. Academic courses may be offered for credit. Students may be able to complete one year of a subject by attending a certain number of hours per day. Some acceleration may result.
2. The Independent Summer School. These schools offer a variety of programs often times different from those of the regular year. They aim for enrichment rather than acceleration.
3. Extended Contracts for Teachers. Under this plan teachers are offered contracts for eleven or twelve months and spend the summer months in a variety of activities such as summer school teaching, workshops, research and travel.

Every fourth summer a teacher may have leave on full pay. This plan has been used for some time in Rochester, Minn. and Glencoe, Illinois.

Of all the various plans for rescheduling the school year, the summer program is the easiest to implement. It is not an innovation and has a measure of public acceptance. Attendance is voluntary and does not interfere with vacation plans. The educational benefits will depend on the type of program provided. It may offer enrichment by giving courses which cannot be taken in the regular year. It can provide remedial work for the disadvantaged and those with learning disabilities. It can provide some acceleration and reduce enrollment. It does allow for greater use of professional skills of teachers and allows time for teachers to work on curricula work.

From the cost standpoint, there must be some additional costs involved. State subsidy for public summer schools should be available in the same fashion as the regular year. The success or efficiency of a program depends on the degree of participation. If enrollment is too small it may not be worthwhile. In any event, it must be a program which will attract and satisfy pupils.

C. Extended Year

There are many variations of extended school years. Some of the plans include the continuous year plan with a school year from 200 to 240 days, i.e., the trimester plan, with three terms for 210 days per year, the split-trimester, the quadrimester plan, the K-12 plan and multiple trails plan.

The extended year plan is relatively free of administrative

difficulties. There is no staggered attendance involved as all pupils attend all day. No minimum enrollment is required. All have a summer vacation. This may have some significance as a Gallop poll in 1967 showed that 7 of 10 families opposed any reduction in summer vacation time. The extended school year offers the most promise for enriching educational opportunities. It allows for remedical work, acceleration and greater flexibility in individualizing instruction. It eliminates a long period of inactivity. Careful attention, however, must be given to how the extra time is used if it is to be worthwhile. It offers a chance to restructure the instructional program. It does involve some additional cost for the first years and educational advantages would have to be weighed against the increased cost. It does make fuller use of buildings and more efficient use of teachers' talents. Some savings may be possible if acceleration is realized.

R.L. Johns, an authority on school financing, believes that an extended school year that increases costs is sound only if it increases the quantity and quality of education and is unsound if it does not increase educational opportunity. The point I wish to emphasize is that any plan should be sound both fiscally and educationally.

IV. Research Findings

While there is no great amount of research on this subject, the Florida Educational Research and Development Council made a study of 1966 of several types of extended school years. The study included 50,000 pupils, 1,763 teachers in elementary and secondary schools. The area selected, Polk County, contained both rural and urban schools and was considered to be representative

of schools of the country. The study required that pupils have at least as long a school year as before, or 180 days per year or 2,160 total days in the grades 1-12. Among the plans studied were:

PLAN I. Traditional Program

With 180 days and a voluntary summer program wherein enrichment courses were available without charge but makeup courses were offered on a tuition basis.

PLAN II. Traditional Program Plus a Free and Voluntary Summer School

The program to include provision for makeup, acceleration by taking additional subjects and being graduated earlier and enrichment courses in the cultural arts. This program involved some additional cost but might be offset by some savings in reduction of the number of students repeating grades. It would allow some extended opportunity but would depend on voluntary enrollment.

PLAN III. Present Program With a Free Summer Program

Similar to Plan II except that attendance would be compulsory for pupils not promoted.

PLAN IV. Staggered Four-Quarter System With One-fourth of Pupils on Vacation Each Quarter

The year would be divided into four twelve-week quarters with each student attending three quarters. Thus 75% of the student body would be in school with 25% on vacation each quarter. Proponents of this plan have argued that it would save money but the Florida Council concluded that it was the most expensive plan yet devised even if quality was not lowered. It would require more teachers and would break the school into four separate parts which would have to be administered independently. It would not

be economically feasible for small schools with less than 720 pupils as an increase in staff or lowered pupil-teacher ratio would increase costs. It was estimated that this plan would increase costs by at least 25% without improving and perhaps decreasing the quality of education. Strenuous objection by parents was found wherever it was tried.

PLAN V. Four Quarters of Continuous Study Making Graduation From Elementary School One Year Earlier and Secondary School One Year Earlier

The school year would be divided into four quarters of eleven weeks each. Each student would be required to attend all four quarters or 44 weeks with a two-week vacation at Christmas and six weeks in the summer. This plan would provide 1,100 days in five years for an elementary pupil as compared with 1,080 in a six-year period on the traditional schedule. This means that it would be possible to complete six grades in five years and result in a saving of approximately 16% in building space. The annual operation cost would be about the same as now because teachers and other staff would be on duty eleven months. Similarly secondary students could complete junior and senior high programs in five years rather than six which also might result in a saving of 16% on space.

This plan, if adopted, overall could reduce the number of years from 12 to 10 and would make it possible for students to enter post-secondary education or the world of work two years earlier, unless the entering age were raised and then only one year would be saved. This plan has some inherent implications in that for the average or below average pupil the quality of the program might be lowered by too great acceleration. It does,

however, emphasize one major point that no plan can reduce costs materially unless enrollment is reduced. Theoretically enrollments under this plan could be reduced as much as 16 2/3% but school would be in operation longer than now is the case. The conclusion is reached that it would not save money and on the contrary an increase of 14.7% would be required at the start. This percentage of increase might decline to about one-half that amount after five years and after ten years might break about even. A modification of this plan is to have four quarters with pupils electing to attend all four or select any three. This, however, would not result in any saving.

PLAN VI. Trimester With 2/3 of Students in School and 1/3 on Vacation

The plan divides the school year into three trimesters of 75 days each. To compensate for the reduction in number of days that school day would have to be 7½ hours long. Although the idea has been studied, no system has actually tried it. The plan would not save money and could reduce quality.

PLAN VII. Three Trimesters of Continuous Study Allowing Pupils to Finish Elementary School One Year Earlier and Secondary School One Year Earlier

Under this plan the school year is divided into three trimesters of 15 weeks or 75 days each. This would require attendance by all pupils for 45 weeks. It is similar to the four-quarter plan of continuous study and the costs would be much the same. It would require additional funds but might break even after ten years.

PLAN VIII. Operate All Schools for 210 Days of Continuous Study, Provide One Additional Year of Enrichment Study in the Elementary Schools and Graduate One Year Earlier From Secondary School

The principal goal of this plan is not to reduce expenditures

but to improve the quality and get a better return on funds invested. It provides one year of enrichment and one of acceleration. The cost would be increased by about 11% but would gradually drop and after eleven years might have a slight saving of .72%. The conclusion was reached that of all the plans studied that the 210 day continuous program gives the greatest return per dollar for both quantity and quality education.

The New York State Department of Education has probably made the most extensive study of extended school years. The underlying emphasis has been on designs that have a potential for reducing costs while increasing the quality as well as the quantity of education.

Thomas, consultant in educational research states:

> School systems can expect to save money with the adoption of an extended school year through the reduction of the number of teaching positions and release of classrooms brought about by the decrease in total enrollment.

This conclusion is based on the assumption that pupils would be accelerated one year in six with a school year of 210 to 215 days. The New York Department recommends no more than one year of acceleration in extended year plans. This conclusion agrees substantially with the findings of the Florida Educational Research and Development Council.

Some of the New York plans are:

1. The Staggered Four-Quarter Plan. This is essentially the same as the Florida Plan #4 which schedules 1/4 of the students to be on vacation each quarter.
2. The Trimester Design for Secondary Schools. This is similar to the Florida Trimester Plan except it is applied only to

secondary schools. It also provides for a longer year with three trimesters of 68 to 75 days. All pupils would attend all three periods. The purpose is to provide one year of acceleration without reduction in the quantity and quality of educational services provided. The illustration is given that after a transition period the enrollment in a six-year high school could be reduced from 1800 to 1500 and at the same time give the pupils the same number of days of schooling in five years as they now have in six years. No estimate was made of the effect on the budget. However, there would be an immediate increase in the transition period and a possibly small reduction after several years.

3. Multiple Trails Extended School Year Plan for Secondary Schools

   This plan has four stages of inauguration. Stage I is designed to provide more space in an overcrowded school by reducing the number of classes taken each day by a student while extending the school year to 210 days so that he would receive the same class time. Stage II provides for acceleration. Stage III is for enrichment especially for slower pupils, and Stage IV provides for continuous progress with or without acceleration. The Department report states that "the potential economic advantages inherent in this plan exceed those of any other known extended school year plan but admitted it has never been tested in actual practices."

4. The Quadrimester Plan. This plan is similar to the one reviewed by the Florida Council (Plan V) whereby the school year is divided into four 52 day quadrimesters which all pupils must attend. Acceleration is limited to one year.

The cost is approximately the same as the Trimester Plan.

5. The Extended K-12 Plan. This again is similar to Plan VII of the Florida Council. It provides for a school year of 210 days with continuous progress. It allows one year of acceleration and one year of enrichment. Lorne Woolott estimates that the increased cost to initiate is about 10% which is close to the 11% increase estimated by Florida. The New York Department believes that after the transition period, the "resulting savings in operating expenses will make the longer school year self-sustaining." The difficulty is that it takes a long transition period to arrive at a saving position.

I realize that the details of the various plans are confusing but they are an indication that there is a live interest in looking at possible adoptions which will improve educational opportunity.

V. Conclusions

In summary, some observations which may be drawn include:

1. That any changes in scheduling should maintain and improve the quality of education.
2. The extended school year of continuous study for all pupils seems to offer the greatest promise for both quantity and quality.
3. Several extended school year plans have been devised which may increase expenditures 10% or more at the start but after a transition period may break even or perhaps better than even.
4. No reduction in costs can be expected unless some acceleration is present.

5. There is certain to be an increase in the number of systems providing extended terms in the next ten years.
6. Study should be made of the applicability of such plan to Maine by reviewing the literature and research on the subject, examining plans now in operation in other states, attendance at conferences and seminars, and visitation of other school systems.
7. The inauguration of any plan should be preceded by a two-year period of preparation. Some of the conditions for success would include: There must be understanding and acceptance by the staff, acceptance and understanding by the community, reasonable vacation for both students and teachers, revision of the curriculum and a new and different concept of space utilization.

In concluding, I am reminded of what Pericles, the father of democracy, once said, "The great impediment to action is not discussion but the want of knowledge which is gained by discussion." I am hopeful that discussions such as you have today will be instrumental in showing a desire to improve education and that by combined efforts we may reestablish faith in the efficiency of educational administration.